IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (Previously Presented) An apparatus, comprising:

an armature having at least one groove formed on an exterior surface thereof, the armature including a valve portion extending away from the armature;

a sleeve extending along an axis, the armature being disposed for movement in a first direction and a second direction opposite the first direction along the axis in the sleeve;

an electromagnetic coil operative to cause movement of the armature along the longitudinal axis as a response to energization of the electromagnetic coil;

a single continuous spring member disposed in the at least one groove in the armature and in direct sliding contact with the sleeve, wherein the spring member exerts a radially outwardly directed spring force against the sleeve that slows the response of the movement of the armature along the axis when the electromagnetic coil is energized.

2. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 further comprising an electric coil disposed adjacent the sleeve for moving the armature in the sleeve.

3. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the armature is generally cylindrical in shape.

4. (Original) The apparatus of claim 3 wherein the at least one groove is concentric with a longitudinal axis of the armature.

5. (Canceled)

6. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the armature defines at least one hole extending axially through the armature so that fluid may flow through the armature from one side to the other.

7. (Original) The apparatus of claim 4 wherein the armature has a plurality of grooves defined therein, the grooves being concentric with the longitudinal axis of the armature, the apparatus further comprising a plurality of spring members disposed in the plurality of grooves,

respectively.

8. (Canceled).

9. (Original) The apparatus of claim 6 wherein the armature defines a plurality of holes extending
axially through the armature so that fluid may flow through the armature from one side to the other.

10-11. (Canceled).

12. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the valve portion is formed integrally with the armature.

13. (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the valve portion is threaded into the armature.

14. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the armature has a generally parallelepiped shape.

15. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the sleeve comprises a plastic material.

16. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the sleeve comprises a metal material.

17. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the sleeve comprises a fiber-reinforced plastic material.

18. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the spring member comprises a plastic material.

19. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the spring member comprises a metal material.

20. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the spring member comprises a fiber-reinforced plastic material.

21. (Previously Presented) A method of stabilizing an electromagnetically operated actuator, comprising:

providing a coil and an armature, the armature being disposed for movement in a first direction and a second direction opposite the first direction along the axis in the sleeve, the armature having at least one groove formed on an exterior surface thereof;

moving the armature along the axis as a response to energization of the coil; and

exerting a radially outwardly directed force against the sleeve by a single continuous member disposed in the at least one groove that is in direct sliding contact with the sleeve so as to slow the response of the movement of the armature along the axis when the electromagnetic coil is energized.

22-31. (Canceled).

32. (Previously Presented) An apparatus, comprising:

an armature having a valve member extending away from the armature;

a sleeve extending along an axis, the armature being disposed for movement in a first direction and a second direction opposite the first direction along the axis in the sleeve;

an electromagnetic coil operative to cause movement of the armature along the axis as a response to energization of the electromagnetic coil; and

a single continuous spring member in sliding contact with one of the armature and the sleeve, wherein the spring member creates a friction force between the sleeve and the armature that slows the response of the movement of the armature along the axis when the electromagnetic coil is energized.

33. (Original) The apparatus of claim 32 wherein the armature includes at least one groove formed on an exterior surface thereof, the spring member being disposed in the at least one

groove in the armature and in sliding contact with the sleeve wherein the spring member exerts a radially outwardly directed spring force against the sleeve.

34-39. (Canceled).